2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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CHAPTER III

The Pukamuni Ceremony

765 182 THE burial ceremonies of the aborigines of Melville and Bathurst Islands, based on the *pukamuni* of the mythical man, *Purukupali*, are, by far, the most important events in their ceremonial life.

These ceremonies, which allow the aborigines full expression for their grief, provide, at the same time, a complete cultural outlet for their philosophical beliefs, their music, their art and their dancing. No one, watching these [781] primitive rituals, night after night, could fail to be impressed by the obvious pleasure experienced by both the participants and the onlookers.

114 765 Spencer (1928, pp. 647–52), is the only investigator to describe and illustrate any details of the *pukamuni* ceremony. Although he saw but one day of the ceremonials, and that of the closing rituals, he records, briefly, many of the procedures which we witnessed in 1954, i.e., the rite of fire-jumping (p. 73), the spearing of the grave (p. 83), and (p. 89), the "spearing" of one of the participants and the erecting of the poles. This evidence shows 177 that, in spite of the disturbing effects of civilization and the complete 765 ecclesiastical ban on Bathurst Island, the *pukamuni* ceremony is still a vital force in the lives of the Tiwi people.

123 During the six months the expedition was on Melville Island, Miss Jane Goodale, Mr. W. E. Harney and I witnessed some, or all of the rituals of four *pukamuni* ceremonies; one of a man, *Waniamperi*, who had been buried within half a mile of our camp; another of an old woman, *Makapini*, who, against the wishes of her relatives, had been buried in the mission cemetery on Bathurst Island; still another of a premature infant; and, only a few weeks before I left Melville Island, one of *Nulatini*, the deceased wife of our helper, *Pulanimbuwi*.

123 128 I will describe the burials of *Waniamperi* and *Nulatini*, and the final rituals of *Waniamperi* and *Makapini*. However, as we saw, in all, twenty-seven *ilanias*, the general pattern of which was similar, I will describe but five of them; three belonging to *Waniamperi*, one to *Makapini* and one to *Nulatini*.[44] The short rituals, associated with the dead infant, will be treated as a separate unit.

[44] The final rituals took place after my departure from Melville Island. These will be dealt with by Miss Goodale.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
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775 the white man came, would have been its totemic place. As the *mopaditi* travels, flocks of screeching black cockatoos fly overhead to tell the spirits [825] at its birthplace, that a new *mopaditi* is coming to live with them. The local spirits, on its arrival, rush out to welcome the *mopaditi*, beating themselves over the head and shoulders[61] with throwing sticks to indicate their pleasure. At its new home, no matter what its previous state, the spirit is transformed into a young person of good health and equable temperament, for, in the land of the spirits, everyone must be healthy, happy and at peace with each other.

Making its camp with the other *mopaditis*, many of whom were old companions, the new spirit goes out hunting and foodgathering with them until the beginning of its own burial ceremonies. Then, with all of its dead relatives, the new *mopaditi* returns to watch the living people perform the dances and chant the songs of its *ilania* and *pukamuni* ceremonies.

As the *mopaditis* are invisible to mortal eyes, the performers at the burial rituals do not see them, although they know the *mopaditis* are in the surrounding forest, watching all that is going on.

When the rituals of the day are over, and all the people have gone to sleep, the *mopaditis* themselves enter the ceremonial ground, carrying out the same dances, and chanting the same songs as those of the living. This happens at all ceremonies, whether they are the *ilanias*, the final *pukamuni*, or the *kulama* rituals.

At the conclusion of its final *pukamuni*, the new *mopaditi* returns to its birthplace. There it is treated as a youth, and has again to pass through all stages of the *kulama* initiation, progressing at the same rate as when it was a living person.

Occasionally parties of *mopaditis*, especially if not long dead, will return to have a look at their living friends and relatives. But, although the aborigines regard these *mopaditis* as well-mannered and kindly, they still fear them.

[781] Sometimes, particularly at night, a *mopaditi* will follow an aboriginal too
[789] closely, making his skin clammy and his hair rise on end. To protect himself, the affrighted person calls out loudly to scare away the spirit. If this is not successful, he will kindle a fire or carry a torch of flaming bark, knowing that the *mopaditis* fear the light. For that reason, the aborigines are safe from the attacks of the spirits of their dead so long as they keep their camp-fires burning.

[576] [61] This is the custom of the living when they meet someone they have not seen for a long while.

13:Barclay J-3 (ca. 1939)1939 O120 Tiwi O120

726 One man will then take a step or two forward, hold up a hand, and stamp vigorously, and all the warriors of his side will copy his actions. "Let 'em all come!" is the attitude adopted. If the enemy does not start hostilities at once, they throw their spears down and jump about like wallabies to show their contempt for the sluggard's marksmanship. They are, however, careful not to get too far away from their own weapons, on which they pounce immediately the first spear is hurled by their opponents. The air is soon thick with flying spears and war-clubs, and the exchange goes on until some unlucky warrior is really hurt, when the engagement ceases.

727 BOTH sides gather round, howling their dismay, until repairs to the injured have been effected. A red-dyed ball of goose-down, which is hung from the neck by a string woven of human [781] hair, is held before the mouth as a charm to divert the missiles, but the warriors owe their immunity from death or serious injury to their own remarkable eyesight and to the dexterity with which they evade, or turn to one side, the hurtling weapons of the enemy. The war-clubs used by the islanders are far more 411 difficult to dodge than the spears, which come straight at you.

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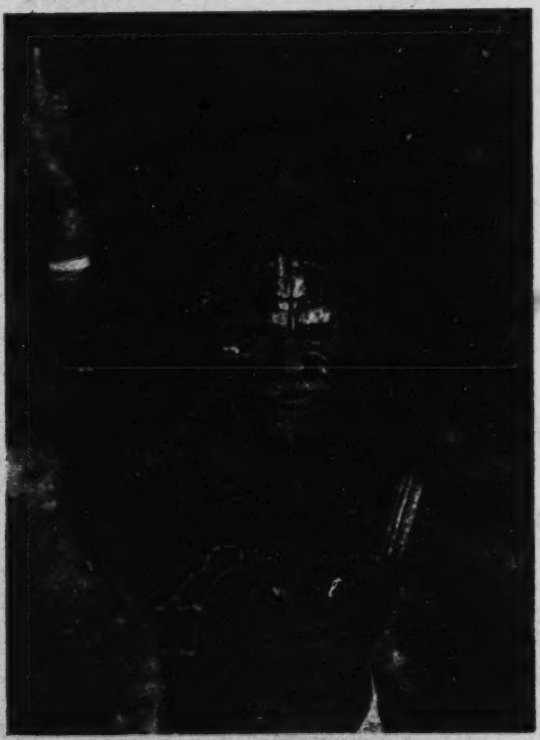

A BATHURST ISLANDER BRANDISHES HIS CLUB.

The war-club is merely a short, bent stick with a knob at one end; but, spinning in the air like a boomerang, it can be thrown for amazing distances by the islanders, considerably over a hundred yards, and not far off two hundred. This weapon is not thrown straight at an opponent, but at a stone, or a tuft of